

RELIANT KITTEN REGISTER



Mewsletter 160

July - August 2021



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The Register caters for all the under 1 litre Reliant 4-wheeled vehicles plus all of their derivatives: Foxes, Rebels, Tempests, Salamanders, Ciphers, Jimps, Asquiths, Vantiques and all other specials including the Liege and the Sipani Dolphin.



The Reliant Kitten Register

Hon. President John Box

The cover car this issue is this vey smart Kitten belonging to one of our more recent subscribers, Andrew Thompson from Port Seaton, east south east of Edinburgh.

“Nice wheels Andrew and sorry I missed you – Ed.”

The Register is a member of the FBHVC, which monitors UK legislation and lobbies on our behalf to protect our freedom to use vehicles of all ages on the roads. Readers are invited to show their own support of this worthy cause by becoming members in their own right. Contact the editor for details.

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Web page: <http://www.kitreg.org.uk>

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SALES, SPARES, REPAIRS,

Mews 160

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E & o e

Welcome to another edition of your favorite bedtime reading.

I was, as you may have noticed, late with the last edition. Here I am at the beginning of August, wondering if I can have this edition with you early in September, and so relax in the confident belief that I am truly catching up! Time will tell.

There were a couple of stories, on-going in one case, that I wanted to let you know about, I will cover them later. See pages 12 - 16 & 22 - 24 respectively, though 26 – 29 are topical too.

I noticed, quite suddenly, that my tried and trusted layout in here has been missing a “Rebel Round up”, “Foxes Den”, “Liege Page”, or much on Tempests recently – how did I allow that to slip?

On the subject of things we had at one time, but have not had for a while, what happened to the idea of me listing our new subscribers, with brief details. It honestly was nothing to do with data protection or the even more restrictive GDPR.

More, I fear, a case of my losing focus, again!

Three years down the line of us being able to accept both new folk, and renewals, on-line, this past 6 months has seen most of our new friends joining on-line.

John and I were both surprised, John at how long it took for that to happen, and myself, the very opposite! I still struggle to understand why, a sign of the times I suppose. I might have been prepared to put it down to being an age thing, but John is even older than I, albeit just by a year! So it can't be that!!

That is 9 pages down, 16 to go, and we are into August already, where does the time go? Oops, another week gone, and I am just over half way, will it get out on time.... Then, suddenly.....

~~~~~

### Epilogue.

I know, wrong page, I'm going to claim mitigating circumstances on this occasion. The bad weather allowed me a few more hours at this over the past few days, and I got carried away. I would say sorry, but the fact is it lets me get, if not to the Church on time, at least this to you in good time for once! G.T.B.J.'s

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The not so Oval Office!

I will be seeking a Presidential pardon. So much progress was made over the weekend, that I am ready to go, and I failed to keep our President in the loop. Humblest apologies to all at the Oval office, and to you. Till next time, stay safe. *Brian.*

Rebel Round up

To be fair (to me!) I used to be able to sit back and let you fill these pages for me, however, things have been quiet on that front for a couple of years, so far as Rebel articles go.

That said, Phil (*I wonder how many folk reading this will remember the I allam itten I* anyway, Phil, having brought his “new” house up to scratch over the past couple of years, has had time not only to focus his thoughts for the future of his old Rebel chassis and running gear, but to move ahead with the build.

So, in the absence of any Rebel input, here is a, mostly pictorial, summary of how much progress he made this year, till he escaped these shores for France last month (where he and Ursula will remain until the autumn).

Suddenly I am faced with the realisation – not for the first time, that my memory is not what it once was! I just can’t recall which was which as regards Phil’s Rebel saloons, and I ought to know, as I delivered most of them to him, usually, if not entirely, by trailer.

Anyway, moving forward, like old number 0003, a Rebel saloon, rebuilt on a new post-production galvanized chassis, one of Phil’s ended up being exported. Unlike 0003, which left these shores under its own power.



Phil's, which some readers may have seen at Birmingham at the Classic Car Show on the ROC stand back in 2011, to where it drove after its complete rebuild, the 330 miles, and the same back, was perfectly capable of leaving these shores under its own power too.

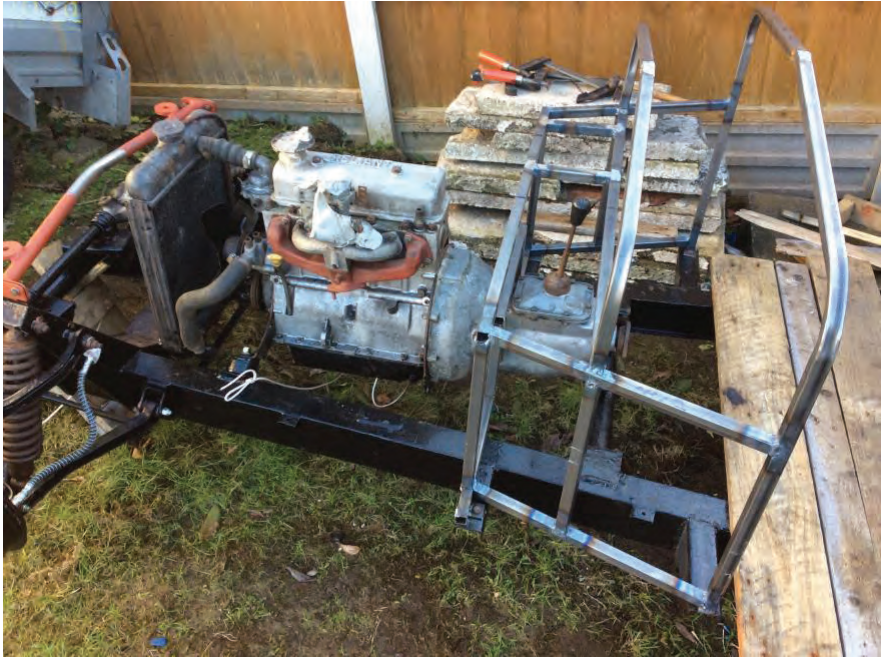
Back to the present day, well, year at least! Here is a pictorial record of the recent progress made during lockdown on Phil's Rebel Special. I say recent, what I mean by that is over the year or so till he escaped these shores for France in July this year – 2021. Hopefully some progress will be possible after his return in October, before the winter sets in.



Above, the seat frame, below, the front mudguards.



Oh bother, if I increase the size of these high res pictures from 6% to 7%, they will not fit side by side, foiled again!



Before and after the remote gearchange mod and bulkhead painting.





Phil's cabinet making skills match his welding expertise.





We are sailing, how did he know it was going to get so wet!



Anyone care to speculate on a launch date?





Joking apart Noah, oh, sorry, Phil, it is looking good.



So, that, almost brings you up to date.

Phil's last words on the subject before he left for the rest of the summer in France (that said, their departure was held up by red tape, and an apparent lack of understanding of the "New Rules" by officials) were :-

Hi Brian

5th June 2021

We coated the outside on Thursday, and today turned it over to glass the inside too. So now all the wood is now fully protected from moisture

It's incredibly strong even with just the outside coated and really light you can pick it up easily. Thought you might like some photos.

Regards Phil (Hallam) No. 164 from Saltcoats.

~~~~~

Hi Brian,

25/07/2021

Hope Moira and you are well.

Reading Mewsletter 159, I think that Bob Riches would disagree with John, as he has successfully supercharged a Reliant 850 engine. **(As indeed did half a dozen Reliant powered Liege owners if you remember, though the big difference there, using Peter Davis' specially made twin rotor screw compressor, was cost. Ed.)**

As you know, I've been corresponding with Bob, since I intend that do it to my engine, to get more low down torque, which is what Bob wanted to achieve, and in fact did achieve successfully and reliably. Not everyone wants to achieve outright top speed.

Only by people trying things, will we know if they work, so please don't put people off trying, without experience of having done it.

Regard Phil (Hallam) No. 164, somewhere in France!

~~~~~

Kitten Maintenance Issues.

Well, perhaps Repair Issues might be closer to the truth!

Robert Enright, our man in Ashford, had the misfortune to suffer a, not unknown, failure in the rear suspension area of his Kitten. The bracket (one of them) that supports the bottom of the rear damper to the axle, failed.

Robert contacted me on June the first, thus : -

Hi Brian,

June 1st 2021

I have a problem with my Kitten (PNA 514R). One of the shocker mounts has broken off the rear axle. I have asked a number of places about repair, and only one, who does car restorations, say they can help.

They say it could take 6 to 8 hours, at £75 per hour to re-attach the broken piece and fit a plate over the whole area for the required strength.

Is this a known problem, and what is usually done? This sounds too expensive to me.

I also need a driver's seat. It had 2 passenger seats fitted when I got it. The frame has now broken on one, so it should ideally be replaced with a driver's seat.

Best Regards, Robert Enright. No. 1142 from Ashford.

~~~~~

**The good news is that Robert eventually found a local chap who did the job for a much more reasonable price.**

**If you can help with a driver's seat, let me know and I'll put you in touch, Ed.**





These pictures clearly show the problem. \*





**What the first picture also clearly shows is the good care being taken of the chassis – if only more of them were so loved.**

**Indeed most of the axle, and the leaf spring, also look well cared for (if not new, there is no visible wear on that spring at all!) too, and is that a Kuniifer brake pipe I see.**

**All really good signs of a well looked after vehicle.**

~~~~~

Hi Brian,

We had the other side off, and after a clean and close inspection, could not find anything wrong with it. Nothing was done, except repaint. We think it broke because of an old crack that took time to go rusty and eventually split.

Its a good motoring forum with lots of interest (despite the name!)

Look forward to your interest for the Mewsletter. Did you register?

Hi Brian,

23/7/2021

Wonder if you can direct me, or answer this. My Kitten is lacking power, and running very rough, almost feels like it wants to cut out at times. Any thought of a hill, and I have to change down. I think the electronic ignition fitted by the previous owner is the cause. The timing is set to about 8-10 deg BTC, idling, but jumps around a lot I have put a short video of it idling on YouTube, I thought about going back to points to prove it, but am not sure which to get. Is a 45D distributor? The electronic ignition seems a cheap type, and has a ring magnet fitted over the cam. I will later measure the compressions, and will email the results.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s86aSSEvIak>

Keep safe and keep well. Best Regards, Bob

Hi again Brian,

23/7/2021

Didn't take long!! Compressions are, cylinder 1 is 158 psi, 2 is 168 psi, 3 is 151 psi, 4 is 169 psi. No 3 is a bit lower than the rest, but still acceptable?

Keep safe and keep well. Best Regards, Bob

Hi Bob,

2/8/2021

Compressions not perfect, but within good enough margins.

You can spend a small fortune on engines, given that most of them are half a century old, very few are in mint condition.

On top of that the power output varies a lot, both in BHP and torque. There are many reasons for that.

Keep me posted on progress.

Regards from Renfrew. Brian

Hi Brian,

2/8/2021

I did wonder. I also think this badly machined cam might have something to do with it? It could be giving multiple triggers on one cylinder.



Oops, I left room for the two pics below, however, I had not looked at them first – still, they fit nicely side by side, and fill the page, so, in spite of its flaw, I'll stick with Plan A, and get this edition out early for once! One day I'll get organised!!



Foxes Den

In the interests of saving time and energy, I am going to cheat here, and use this recent e-bay advert that Phil kindly sent me. Bidding had reached £ 1,320 a day before the auction was due to end. Ed.



Reliant fox pick-up van. Mot till end of March 2022

I've owned the car since the start of the pandemic I use to walk past it and after feeling sorry for it with flat tyres looking unloved I knocked on and bought it. I'm not much of a mechanic but with the Haynes manual and Halfords socket set, managed to get it roadworthy, I know I will never get it running perfect or painted and I truly think it deserves to be taken to the next step. the list of thing done so far are :- Super flex every bush on the car. Gaz adjustable front shocks Powder coated upper and lower wishbones. New front and back brake cylinders with pads. New exhaust. Electronic ignition. Anti roll bar links. Track rod ends. Repaired door hinges. Steering rack dust cover. New brake master cylinder. New rear axle pinion and seal. New 2 row alloy radiator.

I've also repaired the door seals and the flocked window channels, there is many other jobs I've done but like said still many jobs to do.

I do use the car every other day and most weekends.

The car will be sold as a spares or repair running project, just to put it out there all Reliants are a labour of love, and you need to be mechanically minded to own one. Any questions welcome. Cheers Daniel.

The Humble SU – A defence.

By Al Osborn

As our dear John last time round thought the SU was a 'poor' carburettor, herewith some words in its defence.

As supplied by Reliant, there were a few built in 'gafs', that Reliant failed to do anything about, once these are done, the SU can be remarkably well behaved.

First we need a heat insulation spacer between the carb and the manifold. This will stop the "boiled petrol in the float bowl" syndrome, especially after a short stop with a hot engine. (*I remember it well, Ed*)

It can be fussy on dashpot oil, and the strength of the spring, both items cured along with increased pick up by cancelling the hole from inside the air cleaner that feeds air to lift the slide. Then supplying this air by removal of the lifting pin. (*full details can be supplied*).

While working in this area we often find a hesitation on accelerating, particularly around town, this is due to air passage into the carb (from the air cleaner) having a very sharp edge. Putting a 3/8" radius on this cured it (*again full details can be supplied*).

There was also a long-term wear fault with these carbs. Syndrome - a racing / speeding up tick over, which when you slow the tick over down, it then stalls when you disengage the clutch (i.e., load the engine) reason for this is the mixture has gone weak - engine races - slowing it does not cure the weakness of the mixture!

This is a fault that builds up over many miles. The reason behind it, is wear on the side of the butterfly, this allows air to enter around the side of the butterfly – resulting in a weak uncontrollable tick-over. Cure? a fresh or new butterfly. I have never found a worn shaft yet.

In the days of us going to dealers who saw this syndrome, they would say "Set the tickover speed with the clutch down and the lights on (engine loaded), as both these loaded the engine. Once the fault is fixed, depressing the clutch only reduces the engine revs by about 50rpm, not enough to cause it to stall.

As John said 'you are always fiddling with the SU' maybe, but once it is done properly, it stays done, and performs just fine. I often pass 65 in third gear, just to give the little girl an airing.

Another small point, perhaps lost in this day & age, but relevant a few years ago.

If you changed your carburetor, your insurance company could easily consider this 'modified' (yes, you do need to tell them!). Hence they may charge you more. And of course changing the carb costs money no matter how you strived to do it, but modifying that which you already had, costs nothing, along with an understanding of the workings of the 'umble SU.

Al Osborn . No. 295 from Thetford in Norfolk

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## Some interesting quotes.

Sometimes, when I look at my children, I say to myself, 'Lillian, you should have remained a virgin.' - Lillian Carter (mother of Jimmy Carter).

I had a rose named after me and I was very flattered. But I was not pleased to read the description in the catalogue: - 'No good in a bed, but fine against a wall.' - Eleanor Roosevelt.

Last week, I stated this woman was the ugliest woman I had ever seen, I have since been visited by her sister, and now wish to withdraw that statement. - Mark Twain.

The secret of a good sermon is to have a good beginning and a good ending; and to have the two as close together as possible.  
- George Burns.

Santa Claus has the right idea. Visit people only once a year.  
- Victor Borge.

Be careful about reading health books. You may die of a misprint.  
- Mark Twain.

By all means, marry. If you get a good wife, you'll become happy; if you get a bad one, you'll become a philosopher. - Socrates.

I was married by a judge. I should have asked for a jury.  
- Groucho Marx.

My wife has a slight impediment in her speech. Every now and then she stops to breathe. - Jimmy Durante.

I have never hated a man enough to give his diamonds back.  
- Zsa Zsa Gabor.

Only Irish coffee provides in a single glass all four essential food groups: alcohol, caffeine, sugar and fat. - Alex Levine.

My luck is so bad that if I bought a cemetery, people would stop dying.  
- Rodney Dangerfield.

Money can't buy you happiness. But it does bring you a more pleasant form of misery. - Spike Milligan.

Until I was thirteen, I thought my name was: 'SHUT UP.' - Joe Namath

I don't feel old. I don't feel anything until noon. Then it's time for my nap.  
- Bob Hope.

I never drink water because of the disgusting things that fish do in it.  
- W. C. Fields.

We could certainly slow the aging process down if it had to work its way through Congress. - Will Rogers.

Don't worry about avoiding temptation. As you grow older, it will avoid you. - Winston Churchill.

Maybe it's true that life begins at fifty, but everything else starts to wear out, fall out, or spread out. - Phyllis Diller.

By the time a man is wise enough to watch his step, he's too old to go anywhere. - Billy Crystal.



# Alternative Parts

Long time since I contributed on this subject so 'umble apologies. But now a small issue, air cleaners, it would appear that the standard air cleaner for the Kitten / Fox (and the Robin / Rebel et al) has disappeared from sale :-

The numbers I have are Crossland 917, AG 404, Fram CA 2695 but no stock. Despite this part also fitting one of the early 2CVs.

A local car part firm has come up with Moto Quip VFA337 but for £20!!

One thought comes to mind with all this, is change the air box to something you can get filters for? A lot of times I have seen a 'go faster' pancake type air box fitted but if you were expecting any boost in performance, forget it.

In the meantime there does not seem to be any issue with the oil filter supply, Cooper 287 Champion C108, Crossland 547, and Fram PH2834.

Of course if you have anything different to add to these details, please let us know.

A Osborn. No. 295 from Thetford in Norfolk.

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The following arrived in my In-box in July, enjoy.

From: "Larry Mesple". Apologies in advance.

What do Alexander the Great and Winnie the Pooh have in common?
Same middle name.

I was horrified when my wife told me that my six-year-old son wasn't actually mine. Apparently I need to pay more attention during school pick-up.

What is the opposite of a croissant? A happy uncle.

If April showers bring May flowers, what do May flowers bring? Pilgrims.

Which branch of the military accepts toddlers? The infantry.

Did you know you can actually listen to the blood in your veins? You just have to listen varicosely.

Though I enjoy the sport, I could never date a tennis player. Love means nothing to them.

I have a joke about time travel, but I'm not gonna share it. You guys didn't like it.

What's the opposite of irony? Wrinkly.

I was kidnapped by mimes once. They did unspeakable things to me.

Got a PS5 for my little brother. Best trade I've ever done!

What do the movies Titanic and The Sixth Sense have in common? Icy dead people.

I finally decided to sell my vacuum cleaner. All it was doing was gathering dust!

When you die, what part of the body dies last? The pupils...they dilate.

A friend of mine went bald years ago, but still carries around an old comb. He just can't part with it.

~~~~~

## The latest between Giles & John.

Thanks John,

16 July 2021

I have just re-read your letter, so I won't be fitting a turbo.

My father's shed has what appears to be a twin carburettor (he had a Scimitar) I guess it is a Webber, but I shall peer closer, did you say you ran a twin Webber?

My father once spoke about the "ram jet effect" that occurred on the Scimitar this could perhaps be incorporated on a Kitten? I should reiterate that fiscal economy is my watchword, and I don't need my car

to go faster than 80 mph, or have insane thrust. I suppose the best fuel economy occurs when maximum air volume with minimum fuel volume is atomised to the maximum degree in the cylinder?

Bearing in mind that adding water to oil creates the hottest fire, is it worth me ruminating on the idea of an air fuel water mixture, hohoho.

I hope I find you well. Yours faithfully Giles.

Hi Giles,

If the carb is off a Scimitar GTE it'll likely be either a Weber DGM or Ford DGAV (both twin-choke), and, being designed for a 3 litre "Essex" V6 engine, these had a 38mm primary and secondary chokes so will be far too large for an 850! It is possible to use a smaller (Fiesta XR2) twin choke (28/36) Weber on a Reliant engine, though I'm only aware of one so equipped at this time, Kev Hallett's Regal. Still a bit too large for the smaller Reliant capacity though.

Most of us use a single-choke Weber, either a 32ICH or 34ICH. I bought my 32ICH brand new and pre-jetted from Rebels Racing back in the 1990's. These are a nut and bolt fit if you use a 750cc inlet manifold.....

The Ford DGAV's were rubbish anyway (particularly the auto choke) and most GTE owners have changed theirs for Webers!!!

All bar the very first, (later), 2.8 litre "Cologne" V6-engined Scimitars were fuel injected from the factory, as were all the Middlebridge's....

My guess is that the "ram jet" your father was referring to was the operation of the second choke, which only comes in to play above about 2500 rpm.

We also have a Rebel-owning member (Oliver Smith) who is an advocate of water injection but, IMHO, it's a waste of time in a vehicle. He has a set-up on one of his 2 Rebels but the other one (which is his daily) is effectively a Rebel bodysell on a Mazda MX5 chassis!!

A water injection system was developed by Rolls-Royce for the Merlin engine and proved effective, in that it helped solve one of the

major limitations of their SU carburettors - that the mixture tended to get very rich as the air pressure reduced at high altitude so the engine ran way too cool and lost power (plus flying upside-down or using too high a "G" during manoeuvres caused fuel starvation due to fuel slosh in the float chambers). By 1940 though it was realised that the Luftwaffe fuel-injected fighters were far superior in tight turns and could fly upside-down so a better solution was sought.

This resulted in an alternative form of fuel injection (effectively supercharged and pressurised Stromberg carburettors), which both solved the issue permanently and resulted in much higher power at altitude, plus they gained the ability to fly at full power "upside down" and in tight high "G" dogfighting, giving the RAF a marked advantage over the ME 109, (these had been fitted with "proper" fuel injection since before the war). The Spitfire always out-maneuvred the Messerschmitt but originally lost out on top speed, climb rate and operational altitude until Spitfire (Mk 9 I think) came along (type 66 Merlin engine).....

John.



## A sign of the times?

There were 2 messages on my answerphone by the time I checked last week. Both were from a Kitten owner we had never heard from before.

He had had the misfortune to have been involved in an RTA in his Kitten saloon, a car he had been running for a few years. The whole episode would have tested the patience of the best of us, from the driver who caused the accident claiming he knew nothing about it – thankfully not only were there witnesses, but also CCTV coverage from a nearby shop.

As you might expect, the insurers decided that the Kitten was beyond economic repair. It did however have a known good engine. The icing on the cake was that the insurers were only too happy to let him keep the crashed Kitten.

A replacement, Kitten estate, was found on e-bay, however, it had a smaller Reliant engine, and so was down on power.



By the time I spoke to the owner, he had already bought a reconditioned engine from a well-known Reliant supplier, and paid a garage to fit it. This at modern garage rates, by a garage with no Reliant experience! It took them a lot longer than it should have done.

Sadly, while the exhaust emissions were in order, the engine had not been reconditioned, and had a terrible knocking noise. The engine supplier said there had been some confusion, as the engine was not a reconditioned unit, and agreed to refund the cost of the engine, if it was returned to them.

To me the solution was obvious, fit the engine from the saloon, indeed, had I been consulted at the start, that would have been my advice. However, in view of the garage's charges so far, that could literally cost a couple of thousand pounds.

This brought home to me the difficulties faced by Reliant owners who do not do their own maintenance, and, as Derek Wallace reminded me recently, there are very few garages who have the relevant skills, and Classic Car Restoration businesses (who still may not have the right people) tend to charge an hourly rate associated with present day main dealerships. Not something Reliant owners tend to be familiar with!

~~~~~  
Hi Brian, 29/7/2021

A "hot" topic on facebook at the moment is how to get a gearbox refurbished. Parts are virtually unobtainable, and the solution is either risk a secondhand unit, or find someone who can make parts. Some companies offer "reconditioned" gearboxes but the feedback on these is poor (no new parts, so they are basically cleaned up second hand units). One Reliant owner has tried three recon gearboxes from two suppliers and all have been faulty. Same fault as mine - drops out of fourth gear.

Currently my Fox is having a second hand unit fitted ("all good" according to the supplier) but if this doesn't work, I will try to find someone who can make parts. Does Kitreg have a contact? Expensive I know, but I have spent so much recently that it will be more economical to get it sorted rather than give up!

Best Regards, Tony Guest.

Hi Tony,

2/08/2021

Apologies for the slow reply, and I should check my facts first, but I'll push on, and hope to be correct.

Keith Gittus is good at rebuilding components like axles, engines and gearboxes, and, as far as I know James Holland at CHG Classics has all the bits in stock.

It might be worth talking to our man at Dinky Cars, someone else I have not spoken to in ages!

As I said, I have not spoken to any of them for a while, and Keith has a busy life (don't we all!).

I look forward to hearing from you when you get it back.

Regards from Renfrew. Brian.

Hi Brian,

5/8/2021

thank you for the information.

I did acquire a gear box from a Rialto (the seller says it is "all good" and the van is at the garage for fitting - I will know what the score is later today. It is a gamble buying a second hand box but from what I have been reading, getting a "refurbished" box is just as risky. The problem is that there are three reasons why a gearbox jumps out of gear;

Worn or broken detent springs & ball bearings – an easy fix, and not expensive - the pricy part is the labour to drop and replace the box.

This didn't work in my case.

Worn coupling dogs.

Worn selector shaft.

As new parts for 2 & 3 are not available, they cannot be replaced when a gearbox is "refurbished". One person I have been in contact with has had three "refurbished" boxes which all jump out of gear. Hence, I am reluctant to buy a refurbished gearbox.

If I can find someone who has the required good condition parts I would buy them to get my current box fixed (if the replacement box is ok, I will then have a spare). Also, if I can find someone who can make the parts, I would explore this option even if the price is high. It can't be any more expensive than a recon engine, my expense earlier this year. The gearbox failed during the first run with the new engine!

Best Regards and hope everything is well with you. Tony.

~~~~~

Tony,

I live in Mansfield..... My address and phone number are on the inside front cover of the Mewsletters next to Brian's...

A better idea for you would just be to use the internal shafts and gears from this gearbox, and fit them into the earlier gear case. Otherwise you'll need to source the pre-engaged/carbon thrust rear engine plate plus, of course, a pre-engaged starter. You'll also have to make a bulge in the corner of the footwell to clear the solenoid on the starter, as I did on my Kitten. There were no changes to the gears, shafts and synchros throughout production, but the selectors and forks were changed in the early 1980's when reverse was swapped from left to right.

Gearbox stripping is involved but not difficult. Be aware that many of the original blue factory workshop manuals tell you how to disassemble the 'box, but NOT how to reassemble it, and it's not a "reverse the process" action, despite what the Haynes manual says. The "factory" manual on the RKR web site has been corrected.

With my 65bhp "Rebels Racing" engine I tend to swap my gearbox for the spare every couple of thousand miles or so, then stripping the removed one, carefully inspecting the gears and shafts and renewing the bearings and seals (but they still weep slightly from the front cover, a trait I've never found a cure for (in 40+ years of running /maintaining this car)).

The earlier gearboxes, like yours, tend to be much more reliable than the later designs. After about 1993, quality dipped sharply as Reliant were getting them made in India. The engineering was fine but the quality of the metals used was, at best, poor. The internals of both my "stock" gearboxes failed in quite a short time (both stripped teeth off

the laygear) and have been replaced with internals from earlier inertia gearboxes (bar the reverse system, which is different on very early 'boxes, which both my donors were). The gearbox you can have was removed from a 1983 Rialto, which puts it right on the cusp of the change-over from left to right of the reverse gate so without looking closely I don't know. It does have a gear stick in it though, so simple(ish) to check, when I dig it out!

Pre-engaged starters were metric by the way, which is why the gearbox casting needed changing, as the distance between the starter fixing bolts is about an inch and a half less on the pre-engaged. A benefit though is that the pre-engaged is easier to service/remove in situ as they are physically smaller and shorter than the inertia starter.

John,

9/8/2021

I'm interested. Where is it? If it is in Scotland, distance might be a problem but perhaps it could be posted. The spare gearbox I have is ex-Rialto and needs an inertia starter motor (which I do have) and so a different back plate (which I don't have). Do you know of a suitable one?

Your help has lifted my spirits. Every time I sort one breakdown, the Fox finds another reason to stay parked on the drive.

Tony,

I have a complete gearbox here which I know does not drop out of gear, I know, as I drove the car before its owner irreparably destroyed the engine, and afterwards decided to break it... If it's any good to you it's yours, gratis if you want to pop over and collect it....

I have no use for it as it won't fit the Jaffa, which has a late 1994 Robin engine and 'box hence the "Fiesta" clutch. I only hung on to it because it could be modified to the later spec if I could source a front cover, bearing carrier sleeve and thrust holder – no need now though as I have got a spare, complete late 'box too. The 'box on offer is the middle version of the 3 main types, used from 1985 to 1990. This has the pre-engaged starter gearbox casing but still the carbon pad clutch release. All the internal cogs and shafts never changed on any of the gearboxes down the years, bar the selector forks were different after they swapped reverse from the left to the right of the gate around 1982

or so, to allow for the fitting of a reversing light switch.....

The guy it came from, who I've known for years, is principally a biker. He believed the Facebook "know-it-all" who posted the old wives' tale that Reliant engines run better without a thermostat fitted, and don't need one anyway - so he took his out as it was "running hot". The following weekend he drove it up to Scotland – except he never got there, as, on the M6, it lost power, cruising at 70+ and he needed to be recovered back to home by the AA.

This was where I came in – I was called up to Milton Keynes where he lived, to find out what had gone wrong. No 4 piston had seized solid, snapped the con rod and, split both the liner and the block!! I commented on the lack of a thermostat, hence I was told the story.

As the general condition of the car was not too clever, he decided to scrap it, and told me to help myself to anything I wanted – still have a few bits left, like the gearbox, most of the glass, plus numerous small bits, mainly switches and similar. He has another three-wheeler now, but this one still has its thermostat in place!!! I wonder?????

Following your trials and tribulations, reminds me of a problem I had with a Register members' Tandy about 15 years ago, which also started jumping out of gear. Back then Pratsworld still supplied exchange engines and gearboxes so he bought a gearbox from them and fitted it – no change, still jumped out of second and top.....

I went over to his, up at Bedford, to have a look, and found the reason very quickly. It was jumping out due to excessive engine movement, forcing the lever to catch on the centre console and knocking it out of gear. Only then did Steve tell me that the problem had only started after he had renewed all the engine mountings. He had bought the new ones, again from Pratsworld, and when we took one off it was extremely flaccid, so soft that I could almost bend it back on itself between my fingers – rubbish quality!!!

In the short term I just refitted the best two of the old ones at the front, which stopped it jumping out of gear. Last time I spoke to James (Holland of CHG Classics) he reckoned to have most of the gears, shafts and bits in stock on the shelf....

John



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